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SUBJECT: H1N1 Update: 22,936 Cases; Concerns over Vaccine
Program Mounting

REF: Berlin 1236 and previous

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: From October 7-13, the number of confirmed H1N1 infections in Germany rose by 942 cases to a total of 22,936. As of October 12, Germany is reporting new H1N1 cases on a weekly, rather than daily, basis. The Ministry of Health (BMG) announced that the H1N1 vaccination program will begin on October 26. However, controversy is growing over a decision to vaccinate government officials, select civil servants and the military with an additive-free version of the H1N1 vaccine - not the vaccine that will be provided to the German public. BMG has launched a new website to provide information on H1N1 to the public. END SUMMARY

¶2. (U) On October 19, the National Reference Center for Influenza at the Robert Koch Institute confirmed a total of 942 new (laboratory and non-laboratory) H1N1 cases in Germany from October 7-13, increasing the total number of H1N1 cases to 22,936. Nordrhein-Westfalen remains the German state with the highest number of confirmed virus cases with a total of 6,183, followed by Bavaria (3,743) and Baden-Wuerttemberg (3,364). On October 12, the National Reference Center for Influenza at the Robert Koch Institute (RKI) announced that it will no longer provide daily updates on the H1N1 situation in Germany. Updates will instead be provided in a weekly report, publicized on Mondays.

Vaccinations to Begin October 26

¶3. (U) Germany's H1N1 flu vaccination program will begin on October 26. Critics, however, continue to emphasize possible side effects of the vaccine for pregnant women and children. According to the Ministry of Health, a substitute vaccine for pregnant women will be available at the end of November.

Growing Concern over "Second-Class Vaccine"

¶4. (U) Controversy is mounting over Germany's H1N1 vaccination program. Several press articles have reported that the German

military, as well as Chancellor Merkel, her cabinet members, and civil servants responsible for the maintenance of public order will receive vaccine produced by the U.S. firm Baxter. This vaccine does not contain the controversial additive adjuvant or a preservative containing mercury, both of which are present in the vaccine that will be given to the general public. According to the press, a spokesperson for the German Interior Ministry said that the vaccines for the government were ordered months ago, when there were no clear differences between the two vaccines. She added that the version for the public was not a second-class vaccine.

Public Outreach Enhanced

15. (U) On October 15, the German Health Ministry (BMG) launched a new online platform to answer H1N1-related questions. The website, <http://www.neuegrippe.bund.de>, provides general information on H1N1 in 11 languages, as well as links to Germany's state health officials in charge of implementing the vaccination program. In an October 14 meeting, a BMG official reported that 40 to 50 percent of the German population is now willing to receive the H1N1 vaccine.

MURPHY